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If a woman is angry with her husband, her method of retaliation is to go off to her own people, if her village is within reach, taking the youngest child with her. This usually brings the husband over within a day or two, with entreaties to return, because he cannot bear to be parted from his baby. Sometimes his wife will persistently refuse to come back for a long time, and there will be talk of a divorce, but in the end she will relent. This happened again and again in the course of my stay at Kurtatchi.

There is 'medicine' to make a runaway wife come back:

If your wife runs away from you, get some of the leaves of the plant *rakot*, squeeze out the sap, then get some one to steal your wife's pipe, put some of the sap inside the pipe and have it given back to her. As she smokes it her thoughts will turn to you and she will come back.

Sometimes marital quarrels end in the suicide of one or other of the pair. This question is discussed in further detail in Chapter XIV. Suffice it to say in the present context that the examples which came to my notice—by hearsay, however, only—lead me to suggest that these people do not support Havelock Ellis's suggestion that 'among primitive peoples suicide from erotic motives seems to occur chiefly among women' (1933, p. 277).

SOME TYPICAL MARITAL HISTORIES

The information given in the preceding paragraphs was obtained from several informants at different times, and where occasion arose was corroborated by my own observation. Several of the points are illustrated by the matrimonial adventures of Pinari, the *tuwaun tʃas* at Kurtatchi, which may be considered typical, except that most men content themselves with three or four wives to Pinari's eleven, of whom, however, only four are now living.

Marital history of Pinari

1. He was betrothed to Rusu, a woman of rank at Ieta, when both were young. She bore him six children, of whom three are living, now adult and married. She had been dead for some years when I was at Kurtatchi, but was always spoken of by Pinari as if he had cared for her.

2. Tchinagot. Was married to Pinari when she was quite a small child, as his second wife, but died before the marriage was consummated. Pinari regretted this very much. He said she was 'very good'.

3. Tchinawot. Died with her first child, who died also.

4. Tauwo. Had two children by Pinari, one died in infancy, the other is now about six or seven, and is looked after by Pinari. She has

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on to the doors of your house. Your wife will then love you again and will come back to you.

Often but little notice is taken of these affairs. Occasionally an injured husband will claim from his wife's lover a string of ceremonial currency or a pig; or he may take the opportunity to divorce his wife, but usually only if he wishes to do so on other grounds. More often nothing is done about it, unless the woman becomes pregnant.

There are a number of plants (see pp. 134–8) believed to possess contraceptive properties, which are generally known and widely used by the women in their intrigues. Whatever the reason, it is certain that these affairs are followed by pregnancy less often than might be expected. When conception does occur, the matter begins to be taken seriously. Sometimes the woman will pretend that the child is her husband's, and this will be tacitly accepted, even though other people besides the couple and the woman's husband know it to be false. This I have on hearsay evidence only. In other cases—this also I have only through informants, but from more than one, and these reasonably reliable—attempts are made to produce an abortion in order to avoid discovery. One account given to me runs as follows: 'If a woman has been with her lover in the bush and finds she is pregnant, she says to him: "My blood is not flowing, I think I am going to have a child, I have had no flow for one moon." They are ashamed, and talk about it for a long time. Then the man gets the leaves of the *karēb* plant (a tough creeper, of the *Rutaceae* order, whose stems are used for making string), and chews them with lime, and rubs the mixture on the women's abdomen. She swallows some of it, and it causes the flow to begin again. Then the man says to all the people who laughed at the woman because they thought she was pregnant: "Look, she is menstruating, she is not pregnant".' It may be that the massaging of the abdomen is sufficiently violent to produce the desired effect, without presupposing any actual result of chewing the *karēb* leaves. They say that a woman will never bring about an abortion in the case of a child by her own husband, however many she may have. But they do it for the children of their lovers, because if a woman has a child by a man other than her husband she is ashamed. Cases have occurred in the past of women pregnant by their lovers committing suicide by jumping from the top of a tree.

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HOMOSEXUALITY

838 [538] Homosexual practices figure in some of the stories, in each case on the part of males. From discussions arising out of these it would appear that homosexuality is actually found among these people, but is rare, and is regarded with intense disfavour. At the end of one such story, told by a young woman, the names of two men, one dead, one living in another village, were mentioned, and also that of the father of a Kurtatchi boy who had been forced to yield to the former, when he was an old man too feeble to resist. The natives said that such people were *pipiu*, a word which from [732] its use in other connexions appears to mean 'mad', though it was also applied to a boy who was deaf and dumb. In one story homo- [762] sexual behaviour started after recovery from an illness, and the man finally committed suicide by jumping from a cliff. It was related as a fact, with the statement that it happened not long ago.

It is known that homosexual practices occur on the plantations, where indentured men may spend three years in 'quarters' without women. Some of the older people told me they did not like their young men to sign on for this reason. It would seem probable that the segregation of the boys wearing the *upi* might have similar consequences, especially considering the very intimate contact in which they live with the older men acting as their *amro* (see pp. 198–9) during their period of seclusion in the bush. But my informants [839] asserted emphatically that this was not the case, although masturbation was freely admitted. It is at least safe to say that homosexual [881] practices do not form part of the puberty ritual, nor do they enter, so far as I could ascertain, into any other ceremonial observances among these people.

The conventional attitude towards homosexuality in this community is definitely one of condemnation. I do not know how far the assertion that manifestations of it occur but rarely may have been due to this, but the impression I received from the reactions of the natives during discussions on the subject was that the disapproval was more than the expression of the orthodox point of view.

585 [881] Imitations of the sexual act are carried out between women at a certain stage in the marriage ceremonies (see p. 91) and in those marking the first menstruation of a girl who is *tsunaun*. These are

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relations with other women, and since many men have more than one wife, and in any case opportunities for extra-marital intercourse are not lacking, this custom, of such obvious benefit to the mother, does not impose continence upon the male. But the decline in polygamy now conduces to an increasing disregard of this rule. 846

Failing to observe the taboo is supposed to bring ill-health to the child. An obviously sickly baby will be taken as an indication that its parents have been indulging in sexual intercourse during the prohibited period. Some do so in secret, and give the child a concoction of leaves to drink which is supposed to counteract the ill effects of the act. But in general, the women strongly resent any attempt on the part of their husbands to approach them during this prohibited period. A case occurred at Kurtatchi, some time before my arrival, of a man who divorced his wife for refusing him access at a time she considered too soon after the birth of their child. The sentiment of the village was against him, and he never succeeded in obtaining another wife. The following story from my collection also illustrates this point. It was told me as typical of what used to happen in the olden days: [753] [586]

There was a man whose wife had a child. The man asked his wife to go to the bush with him. The woman said: 'No, I don't want to.' The man said: 'Now come, you and I will have coitus in the bush.' The woman said: 'No, I don't want to, I am thinking of the child. I don't want the child to be hurt.' The man pressed her. He said: 'The child is not little, he is a big child now.' The woman said: 'No, I don't want people to laugh at me because my child is sickly.' The man was angry, he went alone to the bush, he climbed a *tsiniv* tree (tall slender tree from the trunk of which dug-out canoes are made). He jumped down head-first, he fell to the ground, and his neck was broken and he died. The woman went to look for her husband, she found him dead. She wailed, and said: 'Alas for my husband, he has killed himself. By and by I shall get another husband.' [824] [762]

It used to be looked upon as so impossible that the taboo on sexual intercourse should be broken, that if a woman became pregnant again during the prohibited period it was said that she had taken a banana and 'made the child come up' with it. 'Face-saving' seems to be popular with the Melanesian, but the method is interesting because of the belief, referred in an earlier part of this chapter, that penetration by means of a banana can cause pregnancy. 846 842

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opinion had it that the death of the child was due to the 'bad medicine' made by a man of Hanahan to whom its mother had refused her favours. He had intended that she should die also, but this had been prevented by my more powerful medicine. He had then renewed his efforts, this time with the desired result. Far from blaming me for the woman's death, which I had feared might be the case, they applauded me for having circumvented the man's evil intentions in the first instance.

SUICIDE

To commit suicide (*nòg boborin*) is recognized as a death for which magical intervention need not be suspected. Three methods are followed, the individual jumps off a tree or from the edge of a cliff, or hangs himself from the rafters of a hut, or swallows the chewed root of the plant *tʃū* which is also used for stunning fish.[1] No case occurred during my visit, but I was told that not long before my arrival Poa, a middle-aged man, had taken his little son (aged 5 or 6 at the time of my residence) to the edge of the cliff and had only just been pulled back in time to prevent him from throwing himself and the boy over, the reason given being that his wife had been angry and had insulted him. The brother of my next-door neighbour, Sobak, hanged himself for a similar reason. A woman now living at Ruri, the 'sister' (actually mother's sister's daughter) of one of the boys at Kurtatchi, hanged herself because her husband beat her, but was discovered in time to be resuscitated. Another woman, the mother of Matarē, also hanged herself, but 'Krapen and Tchub worked on her and she came back'. Besides these actual instances, which were corroborated by the evidence of other villagers, suicide figures in several of the stories of times past (*wasisio*) in my collection. Some or all of these may well have been authentic, but I have differentiated them from the foregoing because no names were given by which the account could be checked. The reasons given were as follows: because his wife refused him intercourse on the ground that it was too soon after her confinement and would therefore harm the child (see p. 157); because his father would not get him a wife; because some one had stolen his ceremonial currency; because he was angry with another man; because her husband beat her.

These reasons may appear extremely trivial to lead to fatal

[1] Cf. Fortune (1932), p. 50.

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762 consequences, but such impulsive action is well known to occur among the Melanesians, and the examples here given tally with others reported from comparable areas. The question is discussed by Seligman (1929, pp. 192–4). I did not meet with an actual case of 'ceremonial suicide' as described in the passage he quotes from Malinowski (1926 (1), p. 97), but there are in my collection several versions of a legend comparable with the one given in Seligman's paper (p. 193, footnote). A girl, angry with her mother because she played a trick on her and her little sister, by putting stones in the basket which they expected to find filled with taro ready cooked for them, arrays herself and her sister in paint and shell necklaces and aromatic plants as if for a dance, and taking their little dog, they run away. After various adventures she throws first the dog, then her sister, and lastly herself down from a cliff where they fall into the shell of a giant clam, which closes upon them.

The following story, told by a woman from the village of Ruri, appears to refer to such a ceremonial suicide:

Takip became pregnant. Every one could see that she was pregnant. They accused her. She said she was not pregnant. She lay in her hut; then she cracked some almonds, she peeled a pot full of taro. Several men came to try her. Takip went to the taro garden and stayed there; when they came to look for her she ran away. She climbed a tree, and came down again. She cried, she called out for her mother, her sister, her father, her grandmother. She climbed the tree again, she tried to jump, she got into a hole in the tree and cried and cried and cried. She came out, she went on and went on and went on and went on; she stood up in another tree, and called out to her mother: 'Look at me.' Then she jumped down. Her head was broken. She died. Some men came and found her. They went and called another man: 'Come and look at this woman who has fallen down.' They touched her body, it was all broken. They went back to the village, they all talked, they broke up her house. They wanted to lift her up, but they could not, she was all broken to pieces. Her head was all broken to pieces. She stank. They made a fire, they all got firewood and piled it up round her body, they set it on fire, it was all burnt. Then they cut down all her taro. (This refers to the usual custom of destroying the property of a person who has died.)

So much for the facts concerning death which came under my notice. We have now to consider what happens to the dead person, first as to his funerary rites, and second as to his subsequent experi-

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764 had been made at uniformity of arrangement, each grave seemed to have been dug at the choice of the persons digging. All were very much neglected and overgrown, but the new cemeteries which are now to be found in connexion with most villages where there is a resident mission teacher are kept tidy under his supervision. Graves in these new cemeteries are marked with roughly carved wooden crosses. Graves in the pagan graveyards were marked with cordyline plants, or, most often, not marked at all, though the relatives knew where they were and pointed them out to me. They [152] did not mind going there in daylight, but only very special circumstances would induce them to go after dark.

No distinction was made in the graves of women and children, and no special portion of the graveyard was assigned to them. [766] Children who die at birth or very shortly after are still buried in the house; for them there is no wailing. Otherwise, children are wailed for and buried in just the same manner as adults. Wailing is not confined to the village in which the person died. One evening the sound arose from a house near my own. Knowing of no death in the village, I made inquiries and was told that news had just been received of the death of Kiots, the sister of Marotē's mother, at Ieta. The wailing went on for a short time only, but next evening it was repeated; the reason then given was 'because Marotē and Pesē are sorry again about their "mother!".'

[762] Persons who die by suicide are, if their bodies can be recovered, wailed for and buried just like any other dead, and I did not learn that any special treatment was thought to be meted out to them in the after-world. Unfortunately, I omitted to ascertain what was thought to be the fate of persons whose bodies were not available for funerary rites.

CANNIBALISM

266 In the olden days, under certain circumstances, the bodies of
766 the dead were eaten. The bones of such victims were afterwards buried without ceremony, with the exception of the jaw, which was cleaned and hung up in the 'men's house'.[1] There seemed to be no fear of the *urar* of such people returning to plague those who had eaten them.

266 Like many, probably most, of the groups who practise, or used
721

[1] The jaws of pigs eaten on ceremonial occasions are now substituted for human jaws.